



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Full Committee

"From Boston to Austin: Lessons Learned on Homeland Threat Information Sharing"

April 18, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

Five years ago, as thousands of people were running towards the finish line in the Boston Marathon, two bombs exploded. In a matter of seconds, a time of celebration became a time of terror.

In the midst of the chaos on this Patriot's Day afternoon, ordinary citizens, first responders, and members of the National Guard worked frantically to save lives.

Our nation was stunned.

This hateful attack killed three innocent people at the scene, including an 8-year old boy.

Of the 260 people who were injured, 16 of them lost legs.

A MIT police officer was later shot and killed as the bombers tried to avoid capture.

Many people's lives were changed forever.

After a strong response from the FBI, the Massachusetts State Police, the ATF, and local police, both of the bombers were brought to justice.

One was killed in a shootout and the other sits on death row.

When it became clear that one of the bombers had been "on our radar" before the attacks, this Committee took action.

After an extensive investigation, we learned there were opportunities where additional steps could have been taken.

Even though we will never know if things might have turned out differently, this Committee's report made several key recommendations to bolster information sharing and strengthen partnerships among federal, state, and local agencies.

More than anything else, the Committee's investigation led to a stronger homeland security bond between local, state and national law enforcement.

We are always working to formalize and improve information sharing between agencies.

Though much more work needs done, at least five of the Committee's seven recommendations have been addressed.

Here are some examples:

- The FBI revised its memoranda of understanding (MOU) with agencies partnering on its Joint Terrorism Task Forces to more clearly encourage information sharing,
- The FBI normalized communication between JTTFs and partner agencies,
- DHS improved their travel record-keeping, and,
- Broad investments have been made to inform the public on the threat we face from terrorism, and enlist their help in combatting it.

These changes were necessary.

They have made a real impact and have remained at the heart of this Committee's initiatives.

After five years, our counterterrorism partnerships are improved and the coordination among federal, state, and local law enforcement is stronger.

We witnessed this just last month when my hometown of Austin was terrorized by a bomber.

In response, Austin Police Chief Brian Manley, who is here today, commanded local and state law enforcement personnel, with 500 federal agents deployed to assist in the operations.

This represented the largest mobilization of law enforcement since the bombings in Boston. Working together, they were able to track down the bomber and stop these attacks.

Unfortunately, the bomber had already murdered two people and injured six others.

I've spoken to several of the victims and their family members.

It was very painful to hear their stories, but inspiring to learn of their strength.

Chief Manley, I was very impressed by the way you led our hometown through such a difficult time.

You were determined in bringing the bomber to his final justice.

On behalf of the Austin community, we are grateful you brought this nightmare to an end.

Now it is time for us to heal.

I know that FBI officials in the area worked hard to support your investigation, including the Special Agent in Charge at the San Antonio Field Office, Chris Coombs, and the Resident Agent in Austin, John Scata.

The tragedies in Boston and Austin are very different.

But they reflect the continued progress we as a country are making towards homeland security.

At the heart of each are basic questions of coordination, sharing, and mutual support.

We must continue to learn from these tragedies so we can prevent the next one.

As a former federal prosecutor, I understand this requires flawless coordination at all levels.

This Committee has achieved a lot, but we are always looking to do more. That is why this hearing today is so important.

I want thank all of today's witnesses for being here.

Each one of you provides an important voice on this issue.

You also represent many brave men and women who spring to action during an emergency.

They work hard to protect American families every day.

This entire Committee is thankful for their service.

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